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# Situation in the Central African Republic

## Report of the Secretary-General

## I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 2387 (2017), the Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) until 15 November 2018 and requested that I report on its implementation. The present report is submitted pursuant to that resolution.

2. Further to my initiative to reform peacekeeping and my Action for Peacekeeping initiative, I asked Juan Gabriel Valdés to lead an independent strategic review of MINUSCA. He undertook that review from June until September 2018, with 15 multidisciplinary experts from various agencies in the United Nations System, and visited the Central African Republic from 2 to 15 July. He consulted with a wide range of stakeholders, including President Faustin-Archange Touadéra, Prime Minister Simplice Sarandji and members of his Government, representatives of the National Assembly and main political parties, armed groups, civil society, women and youth groups, religious leaders and the Central African population, as well as members of the diplomatic community, including the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the European Union, MINUSCA and the United Nations country and humanitarian teams. In addition to Bangui, the team visited Bambari, Bangassou, Bouar, Bria and Kaga Bandoro, and sought consultations in Addis Ababa, Libreville, Paris, Washington, D.C. and New York. The main findings and recommendations of the review are included in the present report.

## II. Context

3. Past peace agreements in the Central African Republic, supported by interventions by the subregion, the African Union and the United Nations, have fallen short of resolving the scourge of violence and conflict that have resulted from the systematically unaddressed and deep-rooted issues of poverty, inequality, impunity, marginalization, contested citizenship and discrimination. The State has struggled with its capacity and presence, resulting in difficulties in providing its citizens with basic services and security, and an economy based on natural wealth that benefits few. As a result, the country has faced a continual cycle of violence and instability, particularly in the remote north-east. The violence in 2013 and 2014 brought additional religious and intercommunal dimensions to the conflict; religion and ethnicity are still used to incite violence. Those combined factors led to the near

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collapse of the State, prompting the deployment of MINUSCA, following interventions by the African Union and by France.

4. The presence of MINUSCA has contributed to important successes, including the organization of the Bangui Forum on National Reconciliation and the presidential and legislative elections held in 2015 and 2016, which successfully returned the country to constitutional order. The Mission also prevents atrocities on a daily basis and continues to preserve and protect the legitimacy and territorial integrity of the State. However, four years into the deployment of MINUSCA, and despite significant investments by the international community, the crisis persists with a serious risk of reversal. It seems gridlocked owing to global, regional, national and local conflict drivers despite the progress achieved. The elections of 2015 and 2016, which were the first democratic, free and fair elections of their kind in the country, brought only a temporary reduction of violence. They did not generate the conditions or framework necessary for an inclusive peace process that would facilitate disarmament and reconciliation. In the months after the elections, the posture of armed groups hardened, amid unmet expectations of power-sharing arrangements and competition over control of territory and access to natural resources, while their attacks on civilians grew and profits from illicit economic activities remained largely unhindered.

5. Furthermore, after the elections, international and regional attention shifted to other critical crises. This was illustrated by the reduction in international forces in the country, which are essential for MINUSCA to carry out its peacekeeping mandate and prevent an expansion of armed groups. The region continued to play a significant role, while evolving geopolitical dynamics added to the complexity of the conflict. In that context, various mediation efforts were initiated. Most were eventually subsumed into the African Initiative for Peace and Reconciliation, under the auspices of the African Union and ECCAS, to which the United Nations committed its full support.

6. Early in 2017, the security situation deteriorated, primarily owing to political and security assumptions that did not materialize. In its resolution 2387 (2017), the Security Council focused the mandate of the Mission on supporting the political process with the objective to contain the security situation, protect civilians and create conditions to enable humanitarian access. Ten months later, that approach has been successful to a degree — the political process is on track, while the political strategy of MINUSCA has facilitated the stabilization of many areas and has contained the security situation in others. However, the political and security dynamics in the country have not changed, the lives of ordinary Central Africans have not improved meaningfully, and the violence has not stopped sustainably.

7. It was within that context that I co-chaired with President Touadéra, the President of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, and the Secretary-General of ECCAS, Ahmad Allam-Mi, a high-level ministerial meeting on the Central African Republic in the margins of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly of the United Nations to discuss the way forward. At that meeting, participants expressed their support for President Touadéra's efforts to bring about peace, national reconciliation and development in his country, while recognizing that stability in the Central African Republic was crucial for regional stability. They recalled the need for all countries of the subregion to remain engaged constructively and for all mediation efforts to be closely coordinated within the African Initiative in order to strengthen the peace process.

## III. Political situation

8. The African Initiative is widely recognized among all stakeholders as the main principle framework for the peace process in the Central African Republic, although its operationalization has taken time and it lacks the required resources. One year after the adoption of the Libreville road map, the Initiative's panel of facilitators concluded its "listening tours" with the 14 main armed groups. At the most recent meeting, held in Bouar from 28 to 30 August, the panel helped to harmonize the groups' demands, which were subsequently submitted to President Touadéra for consideration by the Government. This represents an important preparatory step towards dialogue between the Government and armed groups, tentatively scheduled for November. The panel also consulted two exiled former Heads of State, Francois Bozizé and Michel Djotodia. In July 2018, the Initiative, with support from the Peacebuilding Fund, organized training sessions to prepare armed groups, government representatives and political and social leaders for direct dialogue, with the support of the Community of Sant'Egidio and the African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) organized workshops and seminars to engage women and young people.

9. Civil society, members of Parliament and other national stakeholders, however, criticized the perceived lack of inclusiveness of the Initiative. There were concerns that limiting the dialogue to only 14 armed groups might have a negative impact on the popular support for and successful implementation of any eventual outcome. There were also concerns about the lack of coherence among regional, national and local initiatives, and that the interests of civilians and victims were not at the centre of the dialogue.

10. On 28 August 2018, a meeting was convened in Khartoum with the three main ex-Séléka factions and one anti-balaka faction, with the support of the Russian Federation. That followed an earlier meeting in Khartoum on 10 July that only the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique attended. The second meeting resulted in a declaration, by which armed factions pledged their support for peace and dialogue within the framework of the African Initiative. Although the Khartoum initiative initially raised concerns of parallel and uncoordinated dialogue processes, its outcome and the universal recognition of the African Initiative as the central peace endeavour could strengthen efforts in support of a national peace process. Nevertheless, the armed groups may have hardened their positions.

11. MINUSCA continued to make progress in implementing its political strategy in support of the Government, its reform efforts and the national peace process through local-level agreements tailored to each specific local context and prevailing armed groups. These agreements are supported by community dialogue and reconciliation initiatives; military and police operations, including targeted arrests; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration and community violence reduction programmes; as well as support for the extension of State authority.

12. In Bangassou, a local agreement was signed in April 2018, complemented by the arrest of militia leaders, disarmament through community violence reduction programmes, the deployment of units of the Central African armed forces trained by the European Union Training Mission and intercommunal dialogue by local leaders. Those efforts have produced a noticeable decline in attacks on civilians in recent months. In Bangui, intercommunal dialogue in the city's third district facilitated the gradual return of people displaced following Operation Sukula. Local peace and reconciliation processes in Markounda and Zemio have helped to reduce violence,

increase freedom of movement and facilitate the return of State authorities. Similarly, in Bouar, they have helped to eliminate illegal checkpoints, stop intercommunal violence and secure a commitment from the armed group Retour, réclamations, réhabilitation to demobilize and disarm as part of the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme. In July, that group and anti-balaka leaders in Bouar destroyed 1,652 weapons that had been collected through community violence reduction programmes, symbolizing their commitment to disarming. The Government, with MINUSCA support, also established eight new local peace and reconciliation committees across the country.

13. The Government initiated preparations for elections scheduled for 2020 and 2021. Following its formal request for United Nations support, an electoral needs-assessment mission visited the country from 5 to 18 September. There, it evaluated the political, electoral and security environment, the electoral legal and institutional framework, women's political participation and the capacity and needs of various election stakeholders in order to develop recommendations for possible United Nations electoral support. In June, the National Elections Authority validated the draft electoral law at a workshop that had brought together political parties, national institutions, civil society and international partners; the draft law is pending submission by the Government to the National Assembly. On 6 July, the Government established a working group tasked with drafting a law to reform the National Elections Authority.

14. My Special Representative for Central Africa and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, François Louncény Fall, engaged with regional States in support of the African Initiative. On the margins of the 30 July Summit of Heads of State of ECCAS and the Economic Community of West African States, held in Lomé, my Special Representative held consultations with President Touadéra, Mr. Faki Mahamat and the Chair of ECCAS, President Ali Bongo Ondimba of Gabon. In his regular consultations with regional Heads of State, he continued to advocate for stronger regional relations, including through activating bilateral mixed commissions, to address cross-border issues.

## IV. Security situation

15. Since 2014, the security situation outside the capital has been characterized by continued instability, with armed groups active in most of the country and regularly attacking civilians, peacekeepers and humanitarians. Intensified clashes between armed groups continue to fuel intercommunal tensions and remain the primary source of insecurity and threat against civilians, especially women and children. Notwithstanding the arms embargo and Kimberley Process ban, armed groups continue to benefit from the illegal exploitation of natural resources, taxation through illegal checkpoints and arms trafficking. As a result, their positions have strengthened outside the capital with little repercussion.

16. During the reporting period, the number of security incidents decreased in Bangui, Bangassou and several western prefectures. However, clashes between armed groups, particularly in the centre and south-east, continued. From June to August, near Mbrès, Nana-Gribizi prefecture, the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique and the Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique clashed with anti-balaka fighters, who continued to attack Muslim traders. Front populaire-aligned militia looted 15 villages and burned more than 2,000 houses during those clashes, displacing thousands of civilians. Late in July, three Russian journalists were killed on the Dekoa-Sibut axis, in Kémo Prefecture, in circumstances not yet fully established; national authorities are investigating with MINUSCA support. Early in

August, the Front populaire attacked and burned 11 villages along the Ira-Banda axis, south of Bria, which is rich in natural resources. The Union pour la paix en Centrafrique and anti-balaka-associated militias continued to fight in Ouaka and Basse-Kotto. Anti-balaka-associated fighters routinely targeted MINUSCA convoys in Nana-Gribizi, Ouaka, Basse-Kotto and Mbomou Prefectures. Early in September, several internally displaced persons were killed in Bria following violent clashes between the Front populaire and anti-balaka armed groups.

17. In the north-west, MINUSCA operations and the deployment of a company from the Central African armed forces, eliminated the Mouvement national pour la libération de la Centrafrique presence in Ouham-Pendé, leading to a reduction in attacks on civilians and allowing the return of most displaced persons who had sought refuge in Paoua in early 2018. The Mission's military operations and cooperation between the Government of the Central African Republic and the Government of Cameroon helped to limit attacks on civilians by Siriri, a recently formed local militia engaged in extensive cattle theft. Intercommunal violence between pastoralists and farmers, and their related armed groups, continued in Ouaka and Basse-Kotto, with frequent attacks on civilians and MINUSCA. The Mission's response has been severely hampered by its lack of presence in some of those areas and the extremely difficult road and logistics conditions.

18. Ex-Séléka groups increased efforts to coordinate their illicit economic activities. On 5 August 2018, representatives of the Union pour la paix en Centrafrique, the Front populaire pour la renaissance de la Centrafrique and the Mouvement patriotique pour la Centrafrique met in Moyenne Sido, a town that straddles the border with Chad. They agreed to establish a "mixed force" to fight banditry and control transhumance corridors.

**Safety and security of United Nations personnel**

19. Security remains a serious challenge for United Nations personnel. During the reporting period, 132 security incidents were recorded, including 34 attacks and ambushes by armed groups and criminal gangs targeting United Nations personnel, premises, equipment and convoys, which resulted in the death of one peacekeeper in Alindao, Basse-Kotto Prefecture. Five cases of death threats against and harassment of the United Nations civilian personnel were reported, and attributed to armed and criminal groups, as well as two separate incidents in which United Nations civilian personnel were detained by internal security forces and an armed group, respectively. In total, 26 civilian and military personnel were injured; 20 in ambushes and hostile attacks by armed groups and 6 in road traffic accidents. Seven demonstrations against the United Nations were held in Bangui and other towns. One peacekeeper died from illness.

**Operationalization of national defence and internal security forces**

20. Out of a total of 7,087 verified soldiers of the Central African armed forces, 243 have been deployed in Am Dafok, Boali, Bouar and Moungounba without MINUSCA or partner support. A total of 612 personnel trained by the European Union Training Mission have so far been deployed in Bangassou, Bouar, Dekoa, Obo, Paoua and Sibut, working alongside MINUSCA. The Central African armed forces has received contributions from bilateral partners, including armaments, vehicles, communications and other equipment. MINUSCA is responsible for the ad hoc supplies of fuel in Bangassou, Obo and Paoua, which it then receives in the same quantities by the Government in Bangui. The majority of the 3,232 police and gendarme officers remain in Bangui owing to a lack of essential equipment and logistics necessary to deploy new recruits throughout the country as planned.

21. The leadership of the Central African armed forces has so far maintained high levels of discipline in the deployed units, particularly where accompanied by MINUSCA. Cases of individual misconduct have been adequately managed by the Military General Inspector and the Military Prosecutor's Office. Some human rights violations attributed to the Central African armed forces have been reported; the most serious case being an alleged excessive use of force against an unarmed civilian crowd on 12 August 2018 in the village of Wapo, near Berberati, where MINUSCA does not accompany the armed forces. Other reported violations have included theft, harassment, threats, physical aggression and extortion. Local communities have shown a positive perception of the Central African armed forces, requesting additional deployments, particularly in the Paoua area, where displaced persons started to return. Several ex-Séléka factions continue to oppose strongly the deployments of Central African armed forces.

22. In July 2018, the Government organized a donors' round table, supported by UNDP and co-organized by the European Union Training Mission and MINUSCA, on the national defence and security forces, at which donors confirmed their pledges. In line with President Touadéra's commitments, efforts are under way to ensure the long-term payment and sustainment of those forces. MINUSCA continues to sensitize the forces on human rights and international humanitarian law.

## V. Humanitarian situation

23. The country is second to last on the Human Development Index. More than half the population require humanitarian assistance. Non-governmental organizations continue to perform their life-saving work in an extremely dire and increasingly dangerous environment, de facto replacing the State in delivering basic services in some areas. The spike in incidents affecting humanitarian workers has resulted in severe access constraints and the temporary suspension of activities in several areas. Efforts to address the dire humanitarian situation in a sustainable manner have not moved forward in the absence of development and recovery partners and opportunities, owing to continued insecurity and the lack of national absorption and delivery capacity. The country therefore remains on the verge of a humanitarian crisis.

24. There are record levels of displacement. As at 1 October 2018, there were more than 616,000 internally displaced persons and 572,062 refugees. More than one in four Central Africans remain displaced. Continued insecurity exacerbates food insecurity, and malnutrition and has a disproportionate effect on women and children in terms of broader protection concerns, including gender-based violence and lack of income-generation opportunities.

25. As at 1 October, only 36 per cent of the $515.6 million of the 2018 Humanitarian Response Plan had been funded, leaving a deficit of $330 million to respond to the needs of 2.5 million people.

26. So far in 2018, 7 humanitarian workers have been killed and 18 injured by hostile action, while 294 security incidents against humanitarian actors or organizations have been reported.

## VI. Protection of civilians

27. As a result of armed group clashes, attacks on civilians and weak State capacity, the country continued to suffer one of the worst protection crises globally. That is indicative of serious structural flaws, protection gaps and institutional shortcomings, including a lack of national ownership and responsibility.

28. Through its efforts, MINUSCA aided in the protection of civilians in various parts of the country where it is present, including through local peace initiatives and advocacy in Haute Kotto, Nana-Mambere, Mambéré-Kadéï, Mboumou, Ouham and Ouham-Pendé Prefectures, backed by robust military action and arrests, as required. The Mission has strengthened its early warning systems and improved military-civilian collaboration, with the recruitment of 26 additional community liaison assistants and the establishment of a network of trained protection focal points. Nevertheless, most of its protection functions are through physical protection by MINUSCA as a result of insufficient preventive measures. The sustainability of those efforts remains fragile, particularly as national stakeholders continue to view the protection of civilians primarily as the responsibility of the Mission alone, especially outside Bangui and in areas where State institutions are minimal or not present. There has been some politically motivated public criticism of the capacity of MINUSCA and its willingness to protect civilians or forcibly disarm armed groups.

## VII. Extension of State authority and the rule of law

29. The challenges in extending the State's authority, in view of the historical patterns of a lean State presence in rural areas and its extremely limited resources, are immense. Despite comprehensive efforts by MINUSCA, with the United Nations country team, and investments by other partners, the State remains largely unable to provide basic services and infrastructure to the population outside Bangui owing to a lack of means and capacities as well as logistical constraints.

### Extension of State authority

30. During the reporting period, several initiatives were undertaken to help the Government to re-establish the rule of law and State authority and to provide services in response to citizens' request. MINUSCA and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) supported the organization of the 2018 national baccalauréat exams. MINUSCA and UNDP worked with the Government to develop "Lisango 2.0", a software to facilitate the planning of civil servant deployments. In August, five new prefects, including three women, were nominated to replace the retired prefects of Bamingui-Bangoran, Basse-Kotto, Mbomou, Nana-Gribizi and Nana-Mambéré.

### Justice and the rule of law

31. The Special Criminal Court rules of procedure and evidence were promulgated on 2 July 2018. The Court is actively working, with MINUSCA support, to develop its prosecutorial and case selection strategy. The judiciary resumed criminal sessions in several areas, with support from MINUSCA and UNDP. The Bangui Court of Appeal held its second criminal session from 16 July to 31 August, in which 15 cases were heard, including several related to the conflict. In August, the Bossangoa High Court resumed its criminal sessions, which had been suspended since 2013. However, in general the capacity and functioning of other national judicial and corrections structures, particularly outside Bangui, remained limited.

32. The Mission continued to support the demilitarization of prisons, including the recruitment of 150 out of a total of 300 prison officers. The Mission apprehended nine high-profile individuals using its urgent temporary measures and supported the transfer to Bangui of 54 detainees, including anti-balaka leader Pino-Pino, who had been accused of involvement in attacks against civilians and peacekeepers in May 2017.

### Disarmament, demobilization, reintegration and repatriation

33. MINUSCA is supporting the Government's launch of its disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme, starting in the west with seven armed groups, and continued to expand community violence reduction programmes in six locations for 5,100 beneficiaries. The Government continued to engage with other armed groups to reach further agreements and extend disarmament and demobilization to other parts of the country.

### Security sector reform

34. On 4 July 2018, the National Assembly adopted a law establishing a High Council on Security to ensure greater accountability and civilian oversight over the security sector. On 24 August, the President approved the Government's proposal to reserve 10 per cent of new posts in the Central African armed forces and security forces for former combatants, until 2021. At the request of the Government, MINUSCA started to support the recruitment of 1,023 Central African armed forces personnel, using quotas to ensure fair geographic and gender balance. In August, the European Union Training Mission concluded the training of the third infantry battalion of the Central African armed forces. On 30 July, the mandate of the European Union Training Mission was extended until 19 September 2020.

35. The 500 new police and gendarmerie recruits were scheduled to complete their general training and start specialized training by the end of October 2018. MINUSCA, through the Mine Action Service, continued to support weapons and ammunition management by assisting the national defence and security forces with infrastructure planning and refresher training.

## VIII. Human rights and the fight against impunity

36. Since 2017, the number of documented human rights violations by armed groups and security forces has considerably increased. However, MINUSCA has noted a decrease in civilian deaths linked to the conflict since January 2018, primarily owing to a decline in intercommunal violence. During the reporting period, MINUSCA documented 597 new cases of grave human rights violations and breaches to international humanitarian law affecting 1,077 victims. Armed groups were responsible for of the vast majority of those cases, mainly in Haute-Kotto, Haut Mbomou, Mambéré Kadéi and Ouaka. The most widespread violations remain killings, injuries, death threats, cruel and inhuman treatment and conflict-related sexual violence, as well as the deprivation of liberty, looting and the occupation of and attacks on health centres and places of worship.

37. In June, the High Council on Communication developed a national action plan on preventing public incitement to violence and hate speech, with MINUSCA support. However, the levels of hate speech and incitement to violence remained high, with no noticeable change.

38. The Steering Committee tasked with establishing the truth, justice, reparations and reconciliation commission continued to prepare a plan for national consultations, with United Nations support. Efforts were also under way to develop a transitional justice strategy in support of the African Initiative.

### Child protection

39. Reports continued of the killing, maiming and recruitment of children by armed groups, as well as attacks against schools and hospitals. The denial of humanitarian access was noted as particularly problematic in Kaga Bandoro.

**Conflict-related sexual violence**

40. There was an increase in the number of incidents of sexual violence, including conflict-related, reported by victims to the national police rapid intervention unit, yet difficulties remained in ensuring rapid trials for accused perpetrators.

## IX. Socioeconomic situation

41. Continued insecurity continued to have a negative impact on the country's macroeconomic outlook and prospects for economic performance. Real growth of gross domestic product had stagnated at 4 per cent in 2017, compared with the initial projection of 5.3 per cent. The projection for 2018 was of 4.2 per cent. Socioeconomic growth was further hampered by the continued absence of basic infrastructure and lack of investment, despite support by international financial institutions.

42. MINUSCA and the United Nations country team, along with other partners, have supported the Government in the implementation of the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan for the period 2017–2021, to which donors have pledged some $2.2 billion. The biannual review in June and July showed an increase in the delivery rate of funds to 49 per cent, although disbursement remained slow. The Mutual Engagement Framework biannual review highlighted the need to strengthen national capacities at all levels and to improve national ownership of the Plan and Framework. It highlighted the urgent actions required to achieve peacebuilding priorities, including the swift adoption of laws and regulations to launch the preparation for elections and further deployments of the Central African armed forces and internal security forces alongside MINUSCA. Efforts continued for the development of the sectoral strategies, policies, plans and frameworks that were essential for accelerating the programming and delivery of the resources mobilized so far and for translating them into peace dividends for the population.

43. The International Monetary Fund reviewed the country's Extended Credit Facility Agreement and approved in July a disbursement of $32.1 million. A portion would be used to pay 2003 salary arrears of civil servants and the gradual settlement of domestic debt with private companies. In June, the National Assembly adopted a revised finance bill that increased social spending and public investments.

## X. Mission capacities

44. The context and assumptions that defined the establishment of MINUSCA continue to have an impact on the Mission's capacities four years later. MINUSCA has been deployed to support national authorities when the State has been weak or non-existent. That resulted in often unrealistic expectations on what the Mission could achieve. In the absence of sufficient partners, MINUSCA has often been expected to substitute for others, diverting its efforts and scarce resources away from its priority mandated tasks. Equally important, a range of factors have limited the development of a sufficiently comprehensive political strategy supported by an aligned security strategy. Implementation of the Mission's mandate has been further hampered by the challenges in ensuring that resources are aligned with the extremely difficult operational and logistics environment. However, it is important to recognize the important achievements of the Mission and improvements in terms of capabilities and enablers. Most interlocutors of the independent strategic review have stated that MINUSCA has prevented mass atrocities and the collapse of the State, and its presence remains vital.

## A. Military

45. As at 1 October, MINUSCA had deployed 11,170 military personnel, 3.17 per cent of whom were women. That figure represents 95.88 per cent of the total authorized strength of 11,650 personnel. The MINUSCA force currently comprises 10 infantry battalions, two quick-reaction battle groups, a reserve battalion, a special forces company, a quick-reaction force company and several enabling units, including a military police company, five engineering companies, a heavy transport company, three level-II hospitals, a level-1-plus forward surgery module and three helicopter units, including a combat helicopter unit. The Mission, with guidance from United Nations Headquarters, is reviewing its capabilities and response procedures in order to improve the casualty evacuation support.

46. As at 1 October 2018, a total of 750 troops out of the 900 authorized by the Security Council were operational. The remaining troops are expected to reach full operational capability by end of November, with specialized equipment, including reconnaissance and high-mobility armoured vehicles, as well as enablers, such as engineering vehicles, logistics and medical equipment. MINUSCA will reinforce its military posture with two highly mobile battalions, designed as joint task forces composed of three companies, capable of deploying simultaneously and operating autonomously, with integrated force multipliers. They will act as quick-reaction forces, tasked to address particularly difficult security situations.

## B. Police

47. As at 1 October, MINUSCA had deployed 1,918 police personnel, representing 92.21 per cent of the authorized strength of 2,080. That number comprised 385 individual police officers, including 52 women, representing 96.25 per cent of the authorized strength of 400. Ten formed police units and two protection support units comprising 1,533 officers, including 102 women, were also deployed, representing 91.25 per cent of the authorized strength of 1,680. The transformation of the police protection unit into a formed unit remained pending owing to equipment constraints of the contributing country. Once addressed, the more mobile unit will deploy to Berberati and Bossangoa.

## C. Civilian personnel

48. As at 1 October, MINUSCA had deployed 1,384 civilian personnel (1,151 staff members and 233 United Nations Volunteers) representing 90 per cent of the total 1,524 authorized positions. Furthermore, 273 women constituted 23.7 per cent of the civilian personnel, with 21.5 per cent in positions at the P-5 level or higher.

## D. Status-of-forces agreement

49. The Mission continues to work closely with the Government to address a number of violations related to the status-of-forces agreement, including the import of critical equipment.

## E. Efforts to optimize performance

50. The Mission has strengthened its efforts to address performance in a series of actions encompassing training, equipment, evaluation and leadership. The Mission is

serving as a pilot for the implementation of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment System of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and is developing indicators to measure whole-of-mission performance against its strategic objectives. Since the launch in September 2017 of the online military performance assessment tool, MINUSCA has conducted evaluations of several units, which were mostly assessed as satisfactory, and it is now implementing performance improvement plans as needed, including on the basis of those evaluations. MINUSCA has been an early adopter of innovative technologies in support of operations and force protection. It has made progress in implementing the recommendations contained in the report on the independent investigation by Brigadier General (Retired) Amoussou to improve the Mission's response to protect civilians, as well as the action plan to reduce peacekeeper fatalities following the report by Lieutenant General (Retired) dos Santos Cruz,[1] which has already produced results, with six peacekeeper casualties in 2018 due to malicious acts, compared to 12 in the same period in 2017, although injuries have increased to 34 in 2018 from 18 in 2017. MINUSCA has also made significant improvements in personnel accommodation.

### F. Serious misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse

51. Nine new allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse were recorded against MINUSCA forces between 15 June and 1 October 2018 and are pending investigation by the relevant contributing countries and the United Nations. MINUSCA, in collaboration with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund, referred 19 victims for appropriate assistance, all from newly reported allegations. MINUSCA managers have signed an accountability compact pledging their commitment to preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse and other prohibited conduct. In September, MINUSCA, along with United Nations agencies and national and international humanitarian organizations, signed an information-sharing protocol on sexual exploitation and abuse that clarifies and strengthens paths for timely reporting, referral and multisectoral assistance to victims. In accordance with the measures regarding sexual exploitation and abuse outlined by the Security Council in its resolution 2272 (2016), the United Nations has conducted joint technical review visits to two troop-contributing countries for MINUSCA to strengthen the exchange of information regarding pending allegations of such exploitation and abuse and to better prepare troops for deployment. In addition, the internal committee established to implement that resolution continues to monitor all troop- and police-contributing countries deployed in MINUSCA to identify areas of concerns and relevant actions to be taken.

## XI. Recommendations, including for renewing the mandate of MINUSCA

52. The independent strategic review recommended that a range of measures be taken, in line with my Action for Peacekeeping initiative, including the renewal of the mandate of MINUSCA, which will enable the Mission to move from containment to transformation in critical areas. As such, the refocusing and sequencing of the Mission's priorities and core tasks in accordance with resolution 2387 (2017) remain valid. However, in the light of the current context, some of its tasks would need to be strengthened, such as political support to the peace process and security strategy, two

[1] Available at https://peacekeeping.un.org/sites/default/files/improving_security_of_united_nations_peacekeepers_report.pdf.

new tasks would be recommended — limited logistical support to national defence and security forces and for the electoral process — and other current mandated tasks would be streamlined.

53. To improve the chances of success of the African Initiative-led political process, all actors must give a higher priority to the peace process. That will require renewed commitment to the African Initiative-led process, the democratic legitimacy of President Touadéra and the territorial integrity of the State by the international community and countries of the region, as emphasized at the high-level ministerial meeting held on 27 September.

54. That will also require a strengthened and more inclusive African Initiative-led process as the main principle framework for the peace process, transformed into a comprehensive process that enjoys broad popular support and legitimacy and that takes into account national and regional dimensions. Additional efforts will be required to ensure sustained and coherent regional engagement, including the joint appointment by the United Nations and African Union of a prominent person as a guarantor of the peace process and to facilitate stronger regional engagement.

55. The United Nations, in particular MINUSCA, should have a stronger role in the peace process. MINUSCA must be firmly anchored within it through a greater political role in the African Initiative and by closely aligning the efforts of the Mission to the peace process. To that end, my Special Representative for the Central African Republic was recently included in the panel of facilitators, as agreed with the African Union. I have also asked MINUSCA to reinforce its priority mandated task to support the political process by increasing its substantive and mediation support to the Initiative to complement its ongoing technical, logistical and security support. I have further requested MINUSCA to align its political and security strategies to the African Initiative, guaranteeing a more coherent peace process that connects local and national peace efforts with the ongoing efforts to advance disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, the security sector reform, the fight against impunity and the restoration of State authority, while ensuring that the efforts of the African Initiative are informed by developments on the political, security, human rights, humanitarian and protection fronts. That is particularly important, since MINUSCA will be called upon to support the implementation of an eventual outcome.

56. To that end, I recommend that structural adjustments be made and capacities be strengthened, particularly political and strategic communications, including to better support the good offices of my Special Representative. A common and comprehensive strategic communications and outreach plan by the Government, the African Initiative and MINUSCA would facilitate a better understanding of local perceptions and motivations, inform the population about the peace process, prepare for the electoral process, explain the Mission's mandate and its actions and strengthen its monitoring of media and hate speech.

57. To achieve stronger commitments and more united efforts in support of the peace process, the coordination and partnership between the African Union, the United Nations, ECCAS and all other partners should be strengthened through the International Support Group as well as its in-country mechanism. An inclusive, transparent and coherent approach between all partners is the only way forward. The mandate of MINUSCA should reflect that stronger convening and coordinating role, in parallel with stronger Government capacity for donor coordination.

58. There must be dialogue with all armed groups, with a clear political or administrative objective. At the same time, armed actors engaged in the peace process should honour their commitment to peaceful dialogue and stop the illicit exploitation of economic resources, illegal taxation and attacks on civilians, peacekeepers and humanitarian workers. Stakeholders should agree on the typology of the different

armed and criminal groups, so as to tailor approaches to their specific nature and interests. That will ensure that engagement strategies adequately balance national, regional and international tools and utilize dialogue, robust military and police action, the Mission's urgent temporary measures and the sanctions regime for those who continue to attack civilians and use violence to impede the country's stabilization.

59. Closer linkages between the peace process and justice are required. Transitional justice aimed at reconciliation should be embedded within the political process, while ensuring accountability and effective redress for victims, and support for national reconciliation and social cohesion, including for the return of those forcibly displaced. While different views on amnesty persist, transitional justice mechanisms should include judicial and non-judicial mechanisms through comprehensive, victim-centred and gender-sensitive approaches based on human rights principles. The United Nations, particularly MINUSCA, should continue to support the Government and the African Initiative on this.

60. Stronger support to national judicial and corrections institutions is required, in addition to continuing support to the Special Criminal Court. The coordination of initiatives to strengthen that sector should be enhanced, including judicial capacities, victim and witness protection and prosecutorial strategies. MINUSCA should continue its efforts to arrest, using its urgent temporary measures, and facilitate the investigation, prosecution and detention of those who obstruct the peace process and have committed serious crimes.

61. An inclusive and transparent electoral process leading to the 2020–2021 elections can serve as an integral part of the political process. It should help to address some root causes of conflict by fostering nation-building and reconciliation, and also by facilitating the safe, voluntary and dignified return of refugees and internally displaced persons and helping to ensure their participation in the political process and elections. That would require that local elections be prioritized as much as legislative and presidential elections, taking into account the fact that that the most recent local elections were held in 1988, and that regional elections have never been held. The prospect of the upcoming elections could also help to provide the required impetus in the implementation of key processes otherwise not linked per se to the electoral process, such as decentralization, transitional justice and the extension of State authority, including the redeployment of the Central African armed forces, police and gendarmerie.

62. Should the Council so authorize, MINUSCA could support the electoral process through: (a) good offices by my Special Representative; (b) technical, operational, logistics and security support and capacity-building, particularly to the National Election Commission for the planning and conduct of the next presidential, legislative and local elections; and (c) coordination of international electoral support. Such support would need to begin as soon as possible in order to control costs and ensure that critical processes are completed on time, including to ensure the representation of minorities and participation of displaced persons and refugees. Moreover, Central Africans have indicated their strong wish to adhere to the constitutional timeline. Central Africans must have an electoral process that they can support, including financially, to ensure ownership and for democracy to truly take root. United Nations support for the elections must therefore foster greater national capacity and ensure that Central Africans can support their own elections in the future, thus providing a perspective for reduced reliance on international support in the future.

63. The root causes of the conflict and issues of priority to the Central African people — the greatest victims of the crisis — must be at the heart of the peace process and the international community's efforts, including on security, justice, reconciliation, national identity as well as governance and access to national

resources and equal socioeconomic opportunities. It should be accompanied by material improvements for the population's well-being. Concrete peace dividends would reinforce the legitimacy of the process and its support from Central Africans and would also help to ensure its successful implementation. Implementation of the National Recovery and Peacebuilding Plan should therefore be accelerated. To that end, the United Nations and other partners should support government efforts through the secretariat of the National Plan in boosting project development and selection and in accelerating their delivery and implementation in the prefectures.

64. Neither the Government, MINUSCA nor partners can individually resolve the root causes of the crisis and prevent a relapse into conflict. Sustained strong partnerships among peace, security and development actors as well as with the private sector and international financial institutions are crucial. Peacebuilding activities should have close linkages to development interventions, requiring partner commitment to the country's peacebuilding priorities and sufficient resources for the United Nations system to deliver.

65. The population needs greater protection from threats. MINUSCA cannot sustainably protect civilians by itself, nor can it do so countrywide. First and foremost, national authorities bear the primary responsibility to protect civilians. They must be given greater support to develop the capacity to assume their responsibilities as quickly as possible. A comprehensive strategy on the protection of civilians should be developed involving all relevant actors, particularly national authorities, as well as the United Nations, humanitarian actors and other partners. MINUSCA will further strengthen a "whole-of-UN" approach to protecting civilians, while continuing to improve performance, including by systematically undertaking civilian risk assessments and reviews after its military operations.

66. The peace process in the Central African Republic is contingent on security conditions conducive for dialogue. The effective negotiation and implementation of any outcome will need to be backed by credible, adequate and sustained military pressure to prevent any further strengthening or expansion of the armed groups. This should include putting an end to their illicit economic activities and to encourage their constructive participation in the peace process and in elections. Therefore, a comprehensive national security strategy aligned to the peace process is essential. In addition to accelerating security sector reform, greater support from MINUSCA, the European Union and other partners is required for the deployment and operationalization of the national defence and internal security forces that will face military and criminal threats. Such support also remains essential for the eventual exit of MINUSCA. Should the Security Council so authorize, MINUSCA, together with its partners, could provide limited logistical support to the Central African armed forces, police and gendarmerie, further to its already mandated support, in line with the objectives in my letter dated 15 May addressed to the Security Council (S/2018/463) and in compliance with the United Nations human rights due diligence policy. To ensure unity of purpose, the International Support Group is the most logical forum to bring together these efforts at the international level to ensure a shared vision and coherent support to the security forces.

67. In addition to the Mission's military and police operations, its comprehensive security strategy will make fuller use of non-military United Nations capacities and strategies, such as (a) the extension of State authority; (b) security sector reform; (c) disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes; (d) community violence reduction programmes; and (e) the enhancement of criminal justice and civilian capacity to protect civilians, as MINUSCA has done in its local-level engagement efforts to address violence unrelated to the main armed groups has done. Human rights should be mainstreamed through all of those strategies and activities. MINUSCA and OHCHR will ensure that human rights, as well as concerns relating

to the protection of women and children, are integrated at the regional level, in the overall strategy of the Mission and in United Nations humanitarian and country team strategies, including in local agreements and the African Initiative-led process.

68. As MINUSCA is recognized as the de facto primary security provider, it will shift to a more dynamic posture to align its security capacities fully with and to enhance its operational efficiency in support of the peace process and in accordance with the Central African Republic context and environment. MINUSCA is clearly overstretched, despite the welcome increase in authorized strength by the Security Council in 2017. I will therefore aim to improve the Mission's performance, without an increase in authorized strength. That will involve, inter alia, establishing and implementing a performance management mechanism for contingents and leadership; maximizing the use of innovative technologies; continuing to enforce my zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse; reducing the number of bases and camps; and developing a code of conduct for uniformed personnel and guidelines on the secular nature of peacekeeping, while improving people-centred peacekeeping and community outreach.

69. Those efforts will not be possible without the generation of the right troops with the right equipment and posture to be more mobile, proactive and agile. MINUSCA requires troops with specialized equipment, including reconnaissance and high-mobility armoured vehicles, and with integrated enablers and force multipliers, in order to become more flexible and mobile, with battalions comprising self-sustained companies able to react quickly and simultaneously in different areas. It has proved difficult to generate such specialized capacities, despite considerable efforts.

70. Generating the right capabilities for MINUSCA alone is insufficient to enhance the effectiveness of mandate implementation. Nor will it provide long-term benefits to the Central Africans themselves. The extremely difficult environment in the country cannot be underestimated, such as the continued lack of road and air infrastructure. The latter can only be improved through heavy investment and a multifaceted strategy to address the country's massive infrastructure needs, incorporating all relevant partners and stakeholders.

71. The crisis in the Central African Republic and the complex dynamics in the Central African region cannot be separated from each other. The regional dimensions of conflict should inform the country-specific strategy and vice versa. Therefore, the United Nations system, together with partners, will prepare a comprehensive regional analysis of bilateral and common interests of the Central African Republic and its neighbours and assess opportunities for resolving issues jointly. That should improve the anticipation and prevention of possible risks to regional stability. It could also help regional prevention efforts, such as operationalizing the mixed commissions to better control cross-border threats, including transhumance-related violence and transnational illegal trafficking, and promote bilateral cooperation for peace and development. The regional analysis would further be used to address the war economy using all available mechanisms, including better enforcement of the sanctions regime. MINUSCA, the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa and all relevant United Nations entities and actors in the region would work closely together on such regional initiatives.

72. Given the significance of the war economy, particularly the illicit exploitation of natural resources, the Government and developments partners should urgently address that issue comprehensively. Based on comparative advantages, other partners would be better placed to support the Government in developing such a strategy. MINUSCA on the other hand could support relevant provisions of the peace process related to illicit exploitation and decentralization, as appropriate.

## XII. Financial aspects

73. The General Assembly, by its resolution 72/290, appropriated the amount of $930.2 million for the maintenance of MINUSCA for the period from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019. As at 10 October, unpaid assessed contributions to the Special Account for MINUSCA amounted to $185.5 million. The total outstanding assessed contributions for all peacekeeping operations as at that date amounted to $1,826.9 million. Reimbursement of troop and formed police costs has been made for the period up to 30 July 2018, while reimbursement of the costs of contingent-owned equipment has been made for the period up to 30 June 2018, in accordance with the quarterly payment schedule.

## XIII. Observations

74. Since 2013, when the Central African Republic was once again engulfed in crisis, notable progress has been achieved. Of particular importance is the return to constitutional order, advances in the extension of the State authority and the reduction of violence in several prefectures. However, one year ago, I warned that the conflict had escalated and that if the trend continued there was a serious risk of reversal, with catastrophic consequences. One year later, the strategy outlined in resolution 2387 (2017) has borne fruit, and the situation has been contained. I welcome these positive developments, which are the result of steady Government efforts with the support of the international community, including the United Nations, particularly MINUSCA.

75. However, the situation remains extremely fragile, and the risk of reversal remains real. There are also worrying signs that expediency may take precedence over durable peace and stability, in a context where people are still being killed, injured and displaced; where homes and communities are destroyed and the latter manipulated into violence against each other; and where hate speech continues to incite violence. Looking ahead, we must now work more closely together to transform the political and security context and support national efforts to lead the country from war to peace.

76. It was within that context that I co-chaired — with President Touadéra, Mr. Faki Mahamat and Mr. Allam-Mi — a high-level ministerial meeting on the Central African Republic in the margins of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly, in partnership with the European Union and the World Bank. I was heartened to see the high level of support participants demonstrated for the Central African Republic and for the African Initiative, which they stressed was the main framework for the peace process.

77. Addressing the country's persistent crisis is only possible through a political solution, and I applaud the progress made by the African Initiative-led peace process. There are now valuable opportunities to bring it to fruition ahead of the next round of elections and to prevent further violence or an aggravation of the situation. I therefore urge all stakeholders to prioritize the peace process. I strongly welcome the commitment by regional actors and the international community to include all peace initiatives within the framework of the African Initiative to ensure coherence of the peace process and to reinforce dialogue.

78. I commend the role and efforts of MINUSCA in supporting the peace process, which will be even greater as we move forward together. That is also why the United Nations and the African Union will aim to achieve a greater unity of purpose in the peace process and work more closely together to maximize comparative advantages, such as the Mission's good offices, security posture, field presence and substantive

expertise, including on disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, security sector reform and transitional justice.

79. In addition, Mr. Faki Mahamat and I have agreed jointly to nominate a prominent figure as a guarantor of the peace process and to help promote efforts for the success of the African Initiative in liaison with all partners of the Central African Republic, particularly those from the region. That measure symbolizes our strengthened engagement by the United Nations and the African Union and will facilitate enhanced regional engagement.

80. As the peace process unfolds, the Central African people continue to suffer. Bringing peace and stability will take time. We cannot afford another failed peace process — for the people, the country and the entire region, the risk is too high. It is imperative that rapid and meaningful improvements in the lives of Central Africans are realized and violence ends. Comprehensive progress will require the involvement of broader segments of society in the peace process. Indeed, the Central African people, the main victims of these recurrent cycles of violence, especially women and young people, have historically been largely excluded from peace processes and their outcomes. I therefore look to the leadership of the Government and the African Initiative to put in place measures to ensure the success of the peace process. I urge all stakeholders to support and show commitment to the peace process, and to ensure that it takes into account the valid and deeply rooted concerns of the people, which must be at the heart of any sustainable solution. At the same time, a peace process cannot be rushed; negotiations on grievances should be given the time they need to result in a feasible and sustainable road map of the way ahead.

81. As we have learned from the past, the peace process must prioritize and address — with the support of all national and regional actors — the issues at the root of the crisis. These are not technical or administrative matters; as such, they must be firmly anchored into an inclusive peace and reconciliation process that enjoys broad popular support and ownership. The security and well-being of civilians should be the starting point of any dialogue. I remain deeply concerned that violent competition over illicit economies between armed groups continues to cause the loss of innocent lives, serious human rights violations and an aggravation of the already fragile humanitarian situation. I call for a renewed commitment by armed groups to an immediate cessation of hostilities, to remove their armed presence from populated areas and to halt any further expansion, recruitment and illicit activities. That would demonstrate their good faith to genuinely participate in the peace process, while also bringing a perspective of safety and security to the people. Without that commitment translated into reality on the ground, it is difficult to visualize a peace process that could end the violence.

82. I am disappointed to see that, despite laudable efforts over the past few years, armed groups have retained, if not strengthened, their positions and influence in their respective strongholds and continue to benefit from illicit taxation and illegal exploitation of natural resources. The "war economy", one of the main conflict drivers, must end. Drastic measures to stop such activities are required, necessitating the political will and support of national and regional authorities. I am concerned by the worrisome prospect of broad, ungoverned spaces in the Central African Republic and in the region, which could be used by some actors for violent extremism. Decisive actions are essential, including regional mechanisms to better coordinate necessary measures. The United Nations will continue to support such efforts.

83. I continue to be shocked and outraged by the egregious acts of violence against civilians, peacekeepers and humanitarian workers. I condemn in the strongest terms such unacceptable attacks, some of which may constitute war crimes. I reiterate my calls to the Central African Republic authorities to investigate swiftly and prosecute

the perpetrators. I also recognize and commend the efforts by the Government, with the support of MINUSCA and that of its neighbours, to bring some of the perpetrators of those heinous crimes to justice and accountability.

84. I am encouraged by the efforts made by national authorities towards assuming more responsibility for the protection and security of the civilian population. This requires continued strong leadership, including stopping the manipulation of political actors and armed groups to stoke tensions for their own political or resource gains to the detriment of the civilian population, or to divide international or regional partners. The Central African people can no longer be the eternal victims of selfish or narrow agendas.

85. The recurring demands of Central Africans for justice and accountability need to be fulfilled. However, judicial processes alone are not enough to ensure redress for victims, accountability and support reconciliation. I strongly urge the Government to work closely with MINUSCA to advance the design and implementation of a comprehensive, gender-sensitive and victim-centred transitional justice strategy, and to ensure that it is in full compliance with international human rights norms and standards, and linked to the African Initiative-led peace process. The ongoing work to establish the truth, justice, reparations and reconciliation commission is a welcome step that should be complemented by other mechanisms to ensure a truly comprehensive and integrated process.

86. I welcome the efforts made so far to extend State authority throughout the country, including where the State has been mostly absent, which should lay the ground for progressive decentralization and the strengthening of local democratic governance. However, Central African authorities remain largely unable to protect or provide services to the population, thus greatly affecting its legitimacy and the renewal of the social contract. Its efforts are constrained owing to insecurity but also a lack of means, capacities and logistics, which we must do more to help overcome. As the State continues to extend its presence, it is imperative that the sensitivity and perception of the population be taken into account when deploying State representatives, particularly national security forces. I therefore strongly encourage the Government to pursue its policy of fair participation and representation in the management of public service, including by promoting competent, professional and impartial civil servants, including the participation of diverse ethnic groups. Such measures would help to nurture national unity and build the legitimacy and acceptance of the State.

87. To that end, I welcome the deployment in several areas of the country of armed forces trained by the European Union Training Mission with the operational support of MINUSCA. This is essential to reinforce national ownership and the forces' responsibility for the security of their own country and people, and to pave the way for the eventual exit of the Mission. The deployment of the forces and the broader security sector reform require sustainable financial and logistical support to transform the situation on the ground. It will require enhanced efforts to develop the defence and security forces into professional, representative and geographically balanced forces that are accepted by the local population throughout the country. I would therefore recall the recommendations I made in my abovementioned letter dated 15 May addressed to the Security Council (see para. 66). I also encourage that equal attention be paid to the national police and the gendarmerie, as the main tools to ensure law and order. In that regard, I warmly welcome the expansion of the mandate of the European Union Training Mission to advise the Ministry of the Interior and the gendarmerie on civilian-military cooperation, complementing the role of MINUSCA.

88. I remain alarmed by the continued precarious humanitarian situation, which in recent months has caused internal displacement to reach levels exceeding those at the

height of the crisis in 2014. I am equally concerned by a protracted refugee situation, with the large numbers of Central African refugees in neighbouring countries. I call upon the Government to accelerate measures to support the safe and dignified repatriation of refugees, particularly in the west, where security conditions are in place. That will require support for local community dialogue to ensure acceptance and re-affirmation of the property rights for returnees, as well as assistance from humanitarian agencies.

89. Humanitarian partners continue to provide the bulk of basic services outside Bangui in an increasingly dangerous and costly operating environment, while their operations remain chronically underfunded. It is unacceptable that humanitarian actors are attacked, resulting in loss of lives, and the looting of their supplies. Such actions lead to the suspension of humanitarian operations, which not only deprives communities of much-needed assistance but also prevents development from taking hold. Those attacks must stop. Armed groups must commit to enabling the delivery of humanitarian and development assistance. I also urge donors to help meet the funding requirements, which are vital to providing assistance as half the population struggles to meet daily food needs and nearly one third of the population is acutely food insecure.

90. Serious investments are needed in infrastructure to benefit the population and development efforts, but also to strengthen the Mission's mobility. I strongly urge the Government and all partners to support such investments and to start development and recovery opportunities promptly in order to complement and progressively replace humanitarian assistance. I welcome the greater engagement by the European Union and the World Bank, including through their commitment to enhancing development investment as a means to create a conducive economic environment and opportunities for job creation. That also requires closer alignment of the political and security strategies, which take into account humanitarian and development needs.

91. Despite the serious concerns I have outlined in the present report, I am still optimistic and see many opportunities. To realize them for the benefit of the Central African people, we need to have a shared vision and stronger commitment to ensure meaningful and effective collaboration and sustained partnerships, including through the revitalized International Support Group. My Action for Peacekeeping initiative also provides a basis for attaining such unified support and close cooperation. I stand by the commitments laid out in the Declaration of Shared Commitments on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations with respect to MINUSCA, and call on all stakeholders to do the same, with appreciation for the vast majority of countries, including the Central African Republic, that have signed it.

92. Based on the findings outlined in the present report, I recommend that the Security Council extend the mandate of MINUSCA for a period of one year, until 15 November 2019, with an authorized troop ceiling of 11,650 military personnel, including 480 military observers and staff officers; an authorized police strength of 2,080 police personnel, including 400 individual police officers and 1,680 formed police unit personnel; and 108 corrections officers.

93. The priority mandated tasks of MINUSCA under Security Council resolution 2387 (2017) — to support the political process, protect civilians and facilitate the creation of a secure environment for the delivery of humanitarian assistance — should be maintained, while strengthening its mandate related to its political support to the peace process and security strategy, as recommended in paragraphs 55–60 and 68–70 above. This will require adjustments to the structure and capacities of MINUSCA, particularly with respect to political capacities, and the capabilities of its force. I also recommend that the Security Council include two new tasks in the Mission's mandate, to support the electoral process and to provide limited logistical support to the

national armed and internal security forces, as described in paragraphs 63 and 67. I also recommend that the role of MINUSCA be adjusted with respect to natural resources, relying on the comparative advantages of partners, as referenced in paragraph 72.

94. I am grateful to my Special Representative, Parfait Onanga-Anyanga, for his unwavering dedication and leadership. I am immensely grateful to the resolute commitment of the personnel of MINUSCA, the United Nations country team and the troop- and police-contributing countries, often in extreme conditions. I am also grateful to my Special Representative for Central Africa and Head of the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa, François Louncény Fall, for his role in the subregion in support of the Central African Republic. I thank the African Union, the Economic Community of Central African States, the European Union, the World Bank, bilateral and international partners, including through the International Support Group, and non-governmental organizations for their continued efforts to help the Government and all Central Africans to realize a peaceful and stable country. Finally, I warmly thank Mr. Valdés for his contribution to our efforts in the Central African Republic through his leadership of the strategic review.

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